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ABSTRACT

Outcomes of a four-quarter extended school year plan implemented in a Buena Vista City, Virginia, high school in 1973 are described in this paper. (The school year was divided into three 60-day quarters; each quarter is an independent unit. The tuition-free fourth or summer quarter is voluntary.) The approval process, program objectives, structure, and financial considerations are described. The most expensive components include instructional salaries, air conditioning, and student materials. Savings are apparent when the cost of the extended school year is compared to that of a full year's instruction when a student fails and must repeat a grade. Other implementation considerations include revising the teaching calendar, student report cards and scholastic records, and curriculum. A 10-year evaluation conducted in 1987 by the school board found the following outcomes: increased facility utilization, pupil attendance, standardized achievement scores; decreased dropout rate; and positive evaluations by students and faculty. (LMI)

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Year-Round Schooling: A School For All Seasons

At The Secondary Level

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Year-Round Schooling: A School For All Seasons

At The Secondary Level

The question most often asked is why implement a year-round or extended school program. Tradition has wed school systems to the September through June school calendar for pupil attendance. However, this outmoded agrarian calendar does not provide enough time to meet the educational needs of today's children. The contemporary educational system must include programs for the at-risk, for the potential drop-out, the accelerated, the remedial, the average, and the gifted children. Year-round education addresses the needs of all children in a society which prohibits, with good reason, pupils from securing industrial employment until they are eighteen years old. A practical way to meet the educational needs of today's children in a technological and global society is to provide extended educational opportunities for learning with a year-round schedule.

In "Time for Results", published by the National Governor's Association, the following statement was made:

> It makes no sense to keep closed half a year the school buildings in which America has invested a quarter of a trillion dollars while we are under-educated and over-crowded.

According to Charles Ballinger, Executive Director of National Council for Year-Round Education, "the idea of modifying the school calendars has much going for it to reduce learning loss and encourage the remediation or enrichment of a student's work".

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Dennis P. Doyle and Chester Finn, Jr. in the September 1985 issue of Principal stated, "A longer school year could help the school reformers achieve many of their objectives including higher pay for teachers, opportunities for disadvantaged and slow-learning youngsters to catch up, enrichment programs for the gifted, and simplification of child-care problems encountered by working parents during the long summer holiday."

Rationale for Changing High School Organization

In the early nineteen seventies, a strong rationale for change at Parry McCluer High School was realized by the Buena Vista City School Board, in order to achieve "educational excellence" through the newly adopted "Virginia Standards of Educational Quality" as approved by the Virginia State Board of Education in 1971. The school board, administration, and faculty of the Buena Vista City Public Schools philosophically agreed with the standards of quality as published. After review of existing educational programs in relationship to the new "Virginia Standards of Educational Quality", the administration and staff were of the belief that in order to realize the goals of these Virginia standards of quality, the existing two-semester system at the secondary level needed revision. Also, a number of the Buena Vista patrons had expressed interest in year-round schooling for its pupils in Buena Vista. By survey, a needs assessment revealed that twenty-three percent of pupils at the secondary level would attend a voluntary extended or year-round program. The research revealed that ninety-three

percent of the high school students in the city were under eighteen years of age and ineligible to work in the industrial plants, as prohibited by Virginia State Law 40.1-8. The research provided the school board with information that a large group of high school students were eligible and would attend a year-round school program.

Considerations of Systems for Operation

Many systems of operation were considered before the establishment of an "extended school calendar" or "year-round" program for the children in Buena Vista. Three extended school year plans were reviewed in depth with the idea that each such program was not an end in itself but a vehicle for the attainment of "educational excellence" in the local school division. The extended school year plans studied extensively were the Forty-Five Fifteen Plan, the Atlanta Plan, and the Continuous Progress Plan. After much study and evaluation, the administration and staff concluded that a quarter system, with a voluntary summer quarter that included free tuition and transportation, would meet the needs of the students in grades nine through twelve.

Parry McCluer High School, located in an industrial city with a population of 7,000, has approximately 400 students in grades nine through twelve. The school has twenty-nine teachers with a pupil- teacher ratio of 13.4 to 1. Fifty percent of the teachers hold advanced degrees including a foreign language and science teacher with doctoral degrees. The school is fully accredited by

the Virginia State Department of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Endorsements and Approvals For Change

Before implementing the extended school year (quarter system), a number of approvals had to be obtained to insure the success of the program including:

1. Parry McCluer High School faculty
2. Parry McCluer High School students
3. Public hearings for citizen input
4. Buena Vista City School Board
5. Virginia State Board of Education

The Buena Vista City School Board in regular session on May 21, 1973 approved, on recommendation of the administration, faculty and students, the following resolution concerning a four-quarter program of instruction in grades nine through twelve to be effective with the 1973-74 session:

> While the School Board is not approving a mandatory twelve month school plan and no child will be required to attend summer school under the compulsory attendance law, the school board approves the division of the regular school session into three parts and the change in curriculum to allow one-third credit for each completed quarter. It also approves the expansion of the elective courses in the summer and regular session and directs the administration to apply for approval from the State Board of Education for the one-third credit.

The Virginia State Board of Education in its regular meeting on March 29, 1973 approved the request of the City School Board of Buena Vista to offer unit credit in increments of less than one-half units, stating the following:

It is understood that this waiver of current accrediting standard will allow you to organize your program at Parry McCluer High School into a quarter program which will eventually lead to a year-round operation. It is further understood that all other requirements would be met, including the number of units required for graduation and the 150 clock hours of instruction.

Program Objectives

The objectives of the program were to implement a plan for the development and implementation of a quarter plan to provide year-round schooling in grades nine through twelve in the city of Buena Vista. Specifically, the objectives were as follows:

1. To develop and implement a four-quarter system for high school pupils
2. To increase the utilization of school facilities
3. To provide an optional fourth-quarter to enable pupils to enroll on a voluntary basis for promotion, remediation enrichment and acceleration
4. To provide a meaningful summer program for students below the legal age to work in the local industries
5. To increase students' achievement scores to a level that equals or exceeds their abilities and/or the national average
6. To decrease the drop-out rate to a level below the state average
7. To determine the success of the extended school year (218 days) plan based on the attitude of the pupils and teachers participating in the four-quarter system as revealed by questionnaire

Program Change

The regular school year was divided into three sixty-day

quarters. Each student is given the course objectives at the beginning of each quarter for the quarter's academic expectations. Teachers prepared curriculum guides for each course of study with the support of the Virginia Department of Education Pilot Funds in the amount of $16,506.15 and a transportation grant of $4,329.00. Report cards are sent to parents each six weeks. Two six-week periods constitute one quarter of work and one-third unit of credit. The pupil's final grade is determined by weighing each six weeks grade (two-fifths or forty percent) and the final examination (one-fifth or twenty percent). Each quarter course is an independent unit; however, courses are presented in sequence with three quarters equaling one unit of credit.

The summer quarter offers six quarters of academic study for enrichment, acceleration, promotion and remediation. Student and faculty participation in the extended school fourth quarter is voluntary.

Monetary Considerations

The superintendent of the Buena Vista City Public Schools, believes that every secondary school in America should have the opportunity to develop and implement a year-round school program. Many of the cost considerations for an extended school year are already in the division budget, such as debt service, insurance, hospitalization, guidance, administration, textbooks, custodial services and capital outlay for busing. The three most expensive components in the implementation of an extended school year program are instructional salaries, air conditioning, and student

materials.

Financial Savings to the Taxpayer

The financial savings to the taxpayer can be demonstrated by the cost of the extended school year as compared to the cost of a full year's instruction when a student fails a grade and has to remain in high school for an extra year. In the summer of 1990 the added instructional cost for each pupil attending the extended school year was $136.16 per pupil including transportation. The per student cost for the regular school year in 1990 was $4,254.74. Therefore, each student attending and advancing in the extended year program rather than repeating failed grades saved the taxpayer $4,116.41. In 1990 twenty-eight students who failed in the regular session elected to attend and advance in the summer session at a cost of $138.16 each per student rather than repeat at a cost of $4,116.41 each. This was a gross savings to the taxpayer of $115,259.48. The high school principal, Mr. Wayne D. Flint, firmly states that without the extended school year the administration would have to add three additional faculty members to the high school staff for an approximate cost of $120,000.00.

The school board, administration and faculty had to make provisions for the following organizational changes:

1. The teaching calendar had to be revised to conform to a four-quarter system with mini-breaks for the faculty, students and parents that conformed with community customs.

2. The faculties and principal had to revise the student report cards to conform to a four-quarter system with six-week grading periods.

3. The guidance counselors and principal had to revise the student scholastic records to conform with the extended four-quarter system and six-week grading periods.

4. The curriculum in each subject area had to be revised to include expected student performances, objectives, and terminal outcomes to conform to the four-quarter system.

Program Review and Evaluation

In 1987, the Buena Vista City School Board conducted a ten year evaluation of the four-quarter extended school year plan that brought year-round education to the high school pupils in the city of Buena Vista. The evaluation of the tuition free, four-quarter system with voluntary enrollment for the extended school year (218 days in high school grades 9-12) revealed:

1. An effective four-quarter plan for one hundred percent of the high school pupils that included a voluntary, tuition free four-quarter with an enrollment of 47 to 58.8 percent of the regular day pupils in the fourth-quarter during the period of 1984 to 1990.

2. An increase in room or facility utilization

3. An increase in pupil attendance with the implementation of a voluntary fourth quarter for promotion, remediation, enrichment and acceleration; 15 percent of the pupils for promotion, 41 percent for enrichment, 43 percent for remediation, and 1 percent for acceleration during the summer of 1990

4. An increase in pupil attendance during the fourth quarter for pupils below the legal age to work in local industries

5. An increase in the pupil SRA achievement scores to a level equal to or above the national average

6. A decrease in the local pupil dropout rate from a high point 5.8 percent to an annual range of 5.4 percent to 2.9 percent as compared to the state range of 4.4 percent to 5.6 percent during the period of 1969 - 1989

7. A 92 percent recommendation from the regular school faculty and an 88 percent recommendation from the regular day students participating in the extended school year plan in 1986-87 for continuation of the four-quarter system in Buena Vista

The Buena Vista Extended School Year Plan that provides twelve month schooling has the potential for replication on a nationwide basis. Dr. Charles Ballinger has stated the Buena Vista Extended School-Year Plan is "a high school model for the nation". Virginia Secretary of Education, James W. Dyke, stated that Buena Vista has the only operational high school in Virginia with a four-quarter plan. As stated by Ernest Boyer, in ASCD Update, November, 1986, "The Buena Vista extended year program is a viable extended school year program where high school students can attend for three quarters and may volunteer to extend their studies, tuition free, in a fourth quarter."

According to Boyer, the governors task force on school facilities concluded that a year-round calendar is desirable because it:

> alleviates or at least postpones the need to build new schools during periods of temporary enrollment increases.... Most important, educators to date have found that improved academic performance can result from a restructured calendar that shortens the vacation periods away from formal instruction.

In 1988 at a regional meeting conducted for locally elected officials and school board chairman, Dr. S. John Davis, Virginia

State Superintendent of Public Instruction, stated that he favored local school boards having the option to mandate summer school or an extended school year for students in need of remediation. In 1988-89, the Virginia General Assembly began providing equalized state funds to extend the school year for students scoring below the twenty-five percentile on standardized achievement tests. In 1990-91, with the provision of enabling state legislation, the Buena Vista School Board mandated that all pupils scoring below the 25 percentile on standardized achievement tests must attend school year-round. On the national level the North Branch High School in North Branch, Minnesota implemented the Buena Vista Program in 1987-88.

The Buena Vista Program has been cited by more than twenty state and national publications such as U.S. and World Report, February 19, 1990; Nation's Business, January 1990; NEA Today, December ,1990; USA Today, March 1989; School Administrator, June 1989, published by the American Association of School Administrators; Insight Magazine, June 1989; Orlando Sentinel, March 1989; Congressional Record, August 2, 1988; Los Angeles Times, February 2, 1988; Working Mother, September, 1988; The Year-Rounder, published by the National Council for Year-Round Education, Summer 1988 and The Wall Street Journal, January 8, 1986.

In 1989, the program received the American Association of School Administrators Award For Professional/Practitioner Excellence in Research. In 1986, the program received the Virginia

Polytechnic Institute and State University Excellence Education Award, and in 1983 and in 1989 the program was recognized by the Virginia Education Research Association for significant research in the field of education.

The National Education Association has adopted the following policy statement concerning summer school, extended school year and year-round education:

> The National Education Association local affiliates must participate in the design, authorization, implementation, evaluation, and continuation of the summer school, the extended school year, and year-round schools . . . Employment in these programs must be on a voluntary basis.

The Buena Vista School Board before implementation of the extended school year program received approval from its faculty, students and community. The faculty and students have continued to support the continuation of the program as is evident in the five year and ten year follow-up studies. Community and political support has been over- whelming because of more efficient building utilization and the savings to the taxpayer. The teachers, students and parents have endorsed the program because of the increased opportunities for students to learn and enroll on a voluntary basis. The superintendent has stated that he believes that "year-round education is becoming a 'long awaited' national movement". The primary purpose of the Buena Vista program has been to enhance and improve the quality of education. By survey in Buena Vista the research fails to support the notion that the extended school year limits student participation in student

activities and has a major interference with family vacations. The superintendent has stated that "the bottom line is that the nations children have tremendous needs that can be better addressed through year-round schooling" and "American business could not operate on a schedule with twenty-five percent of its facilities on vacation each year".

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